UNITED
NATIONS

EP

Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/GC.19/17
20 November 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

PRIN

Nineteenth session
Nairobi, 27 January - 7 February 1997
Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda*

POLICY ISSUES: COORDINATION AND COOPERATION WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Inter-Agency Environment Coordination Group (IAEG)

Note by the Executive Director

Summary

Prepared in accordance with Governing Council decision 18/14, the present note briefly describes the activities of the Inter-Agency Environment Coordination Group (IAEG) since the last session of the Council, the progress achieved in its work and the broad conclusions of its meetings.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

1. Take note of the present report of the Executive Director on the work of the Inter-Agency Environment Coordination Group (IAEG);

2. Request the Executive Director to report to the Governing Council at its twentieth session on the progress made in the work of the Inter-Agency Environment Coordination Group, including the further refinement and focusing of its role and functioning, while taking into account recommendations of the special session of the General Assembly on the review of the implementation of Agenda 21.

* UNEP/GC.19/1.

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INTER AGENCY ENVIRONMENT COORDINATION GROUP (IAEG)

1. Pursuant to Governing Council decision 18/14, the present report outlines developments relating to the functioning of the Inter-Agency Environment Coordination Group (IAEG). In that decision, the Governing Council:

(a) Welcomed the establishment of IAEG as a flexible consultative and advisory body;

(b) Decided that IAEG should focus on assisting the Executive Director in coordinating the activities of the United Nations system in addressing the major challenges, as set out in the programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997;

(c) Stressed that, in determining the terms of reference and future activities of the Group, full account should be taken of role, responsibilities and work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development; and

(d) Requested the Executive Director to report at its nineteenth session on the terms of reference, progress made in the work of IAEG and proposed future activities.

2. In 1996, IAEG held an informal meeting in New York on 25 April 1996, in conjunction with the fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. An open exchange of views took place on the selection of a topic for the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to UNEP Governing Council, the preparation of a system-wide strategy document in the field of the environment and the role and functioning of IAEG, on the basis of proposals by the UNEP secretariat. Subsequently, IAEG held a second meeting, in New York on 9 July 1996, to formalize a number of coordination matters in preparation for the nineteenth session of the Governing Council.

3. At that meeting, IAEG decided that the topic for the ACC report should be the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and agreed on an approach and modalities for its preparation. The report, as endorsed by ACC, is being circulated as an official document of the Council at its nineteenth session (UNEP/GC.19/12). The attention of the Council is drawn in particular to the recommendations of ACC (UNEP/GC.19/12, page 9).

4. IAEG also discussed and made proposals for the preparation of the draft system-wide strategy in the field of the environment. It was generally felt that the strategy should be structured in light of the UNEP work programme and should form the basis for cooperation on environmental matters between UNEP and other organizations in the United Nations system. At its nineteenth session, the Council will have before it a note by the Executive Director on the strategy (UNEP/GC.19/19), while the strategy itself will be circulated as an information document.

5. The future work and terms of reference of IAEG were discussed at both meetings. The consensus among IAEG members was that a formalization of the terms of reference and agreement on the future functioning of IAEG should

await the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on the review of the implementation of Agenda 21, to be held in June 1997. It was felt that the special session would have implications of an institutional nature, including inter-agency coordination, and that the functioning of IAEG would have to be addressed subsequently in that context.